



Washington, D.C.--Thursday, October 11, 2018

CMEP Executive Director Joins Christian Pastors and Leaders Call on U.S. State Department to Support Lara Alqasem

We who are pastors and Christian leaders in the U.S. add our voices to those of many faiths calling for the freeing of detained college student Lara Alqasem. Specifically, we call on the State Department to do its duty to protect the rights of this American citizen, traveling on an American passport with a valid Israeli visa to study at Hebrew University in Israel. "Consular access" is not enough; the State Department needs to make clear that the detention of Ms. Alqasem must end, as she has committed no crime nor has been charged with one by the Israeli authorities.

Lara Alqasem's detention also raises political concerns. We note that among those calling for her release and entry into Israel is Hebrew University, the receiving university in Israel where she is to finish her studies. It seems odd, as many have noted, to detain a student in Israel from finishing her studies in Israel on grounds that she is boycotting Israel. But restricting the travel of a US citizen supposedly on the basis of her political activities in the U.S. -- whatever the Israeli government may think of the politics involved -- seems to question the US government's sovereignty and commitment to human rights. Interfering thus in U.S. politics has already drawn the ire of Jewish organizations in the U.S. And the Government of Israel's keeping Ms. Alqasem in detention, for more than a week at this point, makes a bad situation worse.

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* Organizations are only included for identification purposes.

Formed in 1984, [Churches for Middle East Peace](#) is a [coalition of 27 national church denominations and organizations](#), including Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions. It works to encourage U.S. government policies that actively promote a just, lasting and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ensuring security, human rights and religious freedom for all people of the region. [Click here to unsubscribe](#).

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